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similar to them in flavor, being sweet and nutty. The ripe pods are collected and strung upon sharp-pointed reeds about four feet in length. When thus threaded they are formed into large bundles, and carried from the river to the villages, where they are dried in the sun, and stored for use. The seed is ground into flour, and made into a kind of porridge.—*Baker's Albert Nyanza.*

ZOÖLOGY.

Artificial Nests of Insectivorous Birds in Switzerland.—It is evident that the agriculturist must mainly rely on the insectivorous birds to guard against the attacks of injurious insects. The subject has attracted much attention in Europe. For twenty-five years, M. Auguste Burnat has domesticated in artificial nests, numerous species of birds which have effectually stopped the ravages of insects. Such nests, made of various forms and of different materials to suit their occupants, were placed in the trees in gardens, orchards, and in public promenades and parks. The birds most easily raised were the sparrows, etc. (*Fringilla*, *Sylvia*, *Certhia*), the nuthatches (*Sitta*), and the woodpeckers, which last are very serviceable, as are the martins and swallows. The starling has been raised in great numbers, being more easily multiplied than any other bird.

"During the years 1852 to 1857, the Inspector-General of Forests, M. Dietrich, at Grunheim, in Saxony, reported that two species of Beetles, the *Hylobius abietis* and *ater* [allied to our Pine Weevils], had ravaged to a great extent the firs of his district. During this time there were spent in destroying these insects over four thousand francs, but in spite of every effort the evil still existed. It was then remedied by the Starlings. The inspector placed one hundred and twenty-one artificial nests in the neighborhood of the plantation of pines (*epiceas*). The success was complete. At the end of May, in examining some young Starlings scarcely able to fly, their stomachs were found filled with Weevils, whose "snouts" had been, previously to their being swallowed, broken off by the parent birds. If the Starlings sometime feed on plumbs and grapes, they can be easily frightened off. There are few regions where so much fruit is produced as in the principality of Alenbourg; we may attribute the cause, in part, to the artificial nests established for the Starling. It is the same in Holstein and in Lombardy, where they take the same care in multiplying the Owls."—*Bulletin de la Societe d'Acclimatation.*

We learn that two hundred English Sparrows were last year domesticated in Union Park, in New York city, and that they completely destroyed the Canker-worms infesting the shade trees. Forty pairs have just been imported into New Haven. The English Sparrow also feeds very largely on grain, and may prove troublesome to farmers.

The attention of the Boston Society of Natural History has been called to the thieving propensities of this bird. "At a meeting of this Society, held April 18th, Dr. Charles Pickering called attention to the recent introduction of the House sparrow of Europe into this country. As it threatens great evil, preventive measures should be speedily adopted. Proofs of its destructive habits were cited from standard authors, showing that the bird had been the acknowledged enemy of mankind for more than five thousand years. When writing was invented the sparrow was selected for the hieroglyphic character signifying *enemy.*

"Sonnini, in the Dictionaire d'Histoire Naturelle, published in 1817, says: —

"'Sparrows are impudent parasites, living only in society with man and dividing with him his grain, his fruit, and his home; they attack the first fruit that ripens, the grain as it approaches maturity, and even that which has been stored in granaries. Some writers have wrongly supposed that the insects destroyed by them compensated for their ravages on grain; eighty-two grains of wheat were counted in the craw of a sparrow shot by the writer, and Rougier de la Bergerie, to whom we owe excellent memoirs on rural economy, estimates that the sparrows of France consume annually ten million bushels of wheat.'

"Jardine says that a price is set on their heads because of their severe depredations on grain and garden seed, and Valmont-Bomare makes a similar statement in his Dictionary.

"That their destructive propensities were popularly known in England is shown by Cowper's lines: —

"'The sparrows peep and quit the sheltering eaves
To seize the fair occasion; well they eye
The scattered grain, and thievishly resolved
To escape the impending famine: often scared
As oft return, a pert, voracious kind.'"

Our native insectivorous birds, including the Crow and Robin, which have lately fallen into disfavor, should be carefully protected. They undoubtedly save more money to the farmer in eating grubs, worms, and insects, than he loses by their fondness for grains and fruits. If we destroy the balance of nature, and cause a disproportion between the number of insectivorous birds and their insect food, we shall certainly suffer from the increase of obnoxious insects.

GEOLOGY.

Advance of Geological Science. — In his inaugural address, the President (W. R. Grove) of the British Association stated that most geologists of the present day, instead of holding that the breaks or chasms in the geological record represent sudden changes in the formation of the earth's crust, adopt the alternatives that they arise from dislocations occasioned since the original deposition of strata, or from gradual shifting of the areas of submergence; that the advance of science has more or less filled up the gaps supposed to exist between the characteristics of the extinct and the new species; and that the apparent difficulty of admitting unlimited modification of species would seem to have arisen from the comparison of the extreme ends of the scale, where the intermediate links, or some of them, were wanting.